

Yulin Xiao Qu: Chinese Folk Songs of Northern Shaanxi Province

Jia Wang*, Khomkrich Karin, Peerapong Sensai

College of Music, Mahasarakham University, Mahasarakham Province, Thailand

Corresponding author: Jia Wang, E-mail: zucczez7@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: January 13, 2025

Accepted: March 23, 2025

Published: March 31, 2025

Volume: 13 Issue: 2

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

ABSTRACT

Yulin Xiao Qu, a traditional folk music form from Northern Shaanxi Province, holds significant cultural and historical value. This study explores the development, singing techniques, and preservation strategies of Yulin Xiao Qu. Through literature reviews, field investigations, and key informant interviews, the research categorizes its historical evolution into six distinct periods, highlighting its transformation from an oral tradition to a recognized national intangible cultural heritage. The study further examines the intricate singing techniques of Yulin Xiao Qu, including breath control, resonance, lyrical articulation, and specialized vocal embellishments such as *Run Qiang*. Despite its historical significance, Yulin Xiao Qu faces challenges in transmission due to changing cultural trends, limited participation among younger generations, and a lack of institutional support. To address these issues, this research proposes preservation strategies such as the establishment of cultural heritage centers, integration into educational curricula, and the use of digital platforms for wider dissemination. By combining traditional and modern approaches, Yulin Xiao Qu can be safeguarded and adapted for contemporary audiences while maintaining its artistic integrity. The findings provide a comprehensive framework for ensuring the longevity of Yulin Xiao Qu, contributing to the broader efforts of preserving Chinese folk music traditions.

Key words: Yulin Xiao Qu, Folk Music, Northern Shaanxi, Singing Techniques, Cultural Heritage, Music Preservation, Traditional Transmission

INTRODUCTION

Research Background

Northern Shaanxi folk songs are an important part of the local folk music culture in Shaanxi Province, characterized by strong regional traits and rich cultural connotations. Among the many folk songs in China, Northern Shaanxi folk songs have developed a unique style due to the region's distinctive geographical environment and cultural influences. The subject matter of these folk songs is diverse, often incorporating repetitive lyrics and the technique of comparison. Their melodies are loud and bright, reflecting the simple yet heroic character of the people of Northern Shaanxi (He, 2020; Wang, 2023).

The themes of folk songs are rich and varied, and there are multiple ways to classify them. Generally, folk songs can be divided into three categories based on their themes: *chant*, *folk song*, and *minor*. Labor chants include portering chants, boatman chants, and workshop chants. These are the most representative artistic themes in the historical development of folk songs (Shen, 2010). Their rhythm is typically clear and simple, often performed in forms such as solo singing, call-and-response, or group singing. Labor chants serve to inspire the labor spirit, enhance enthusiasm, and synchronize work rhythms. Folk songs encompass general folk

songs, grazing songs, and *Tian Yang* folk songs. These songs predominantly revolve around themes of labor and love, featuring rich and often improvised lyrics that depict nature and daily life. Their melodies are typically high-pitched, loud, concise, hearty, and unrestrained, with a free-flowing rhythm. Minors include ballads, time tunes, dance songs, and other small ditties popular in cities and towns. These folk songs express emotions and serve as entertainment in daily life, including weddings and funerals. The main theme of minor folk songs is often the love between young men and women. Their melodies are lyrical and fluent, with a balanced structure, symmetrical rhythm, and expressive emotions (Barnard, 2006; Bai, 2011a; Jiang, 2014).

Yulin Xiao Qu, also known as *Playing Silk Strings* and *Yulin Qing Singing*, is a traditional folk singing style accompanied by musical instruments, primarily popular in Yulin County, Northern Shaanxi Province. It is a unique variety of folk music in Yulin, performed in a seated style without makeup or a stage. Traditionally, it is sung solo, often interspersed with dialogue or performed as a duet, with male singers sometimes adopting female voices. The instrumental accompaniment primarily includes the dulcimer, with additional instruments such as the three-string, guzheng, pipa, and occasionally *Jinghu* and *Yueqin*. Percussion instruments

are minimal, typically limited to a single porcelain dish, and the lyrics are mostly lyrical ditties (Chen, 2005; Wang, 2007; Cheng, 2013).

The performance style of *Yulin Xiao Qu* allows for solo or duet singing. The singing technique follows four traditional elements: correct pronunciation, smooth phrasing, vocal control, and skillful execution. Performers combine true and falsetto voices with dynamic variations. Singing requires precise control, smooth transitions, and mastery of grace notes, particularly in executing glissando and stops. Instrumentation is also crucial, with traditional accompaniment including the fourteen-string *Qin Pen*, pipa, dulcimer, *Jinghu*, and three-string. In modern adaptations, additional instruments such as the *Zhongruan* and *Jianzi*, and even the Western cello, have been incorporated. The singer often performs on an *urn dish*, the sole percussion instrument in the ensemble. Typically, the left hand holds a chopstick between the fingers on the porcelain dish, while the right hand plays with another chopstick (Bai, 2011b; Li, 2017).

Although *Yulin Xiao Qu* has been recognized as part of China's national intangible cultural heritage, it still faces the risk of being lost. With the evolution of modern society, participation among young people has declined, and the content of *Xiao Qu* struggles to stay relevant. Its survival now relies heavily on individual efforts, such as those of *Teacher Wang Qing*, whose dedication as a successor reflects an increasing sense of urgency for its preservation. Additionally, public preferences have shifted toward fashionable and mainstream music, causing traditional folk genres like *Yulin Xiao Qu* to fade from public attention (Jiang, 2015).

With advancements in technology and artistic trends in the 21st century, *Yulin Xiao Qu* has remained primarily an oral tradition based on perceptual experience. However, there is an urgent need to document and transcribe these works from oral transmission to written records for wider accessibility and learning. Educational institutions rarely incorporate this traditional music into primary, secondary, or university curricula. While folk songs from *Northern Shaanxi* are widely known, *Yulin Xiao Qu*, as a significant branch, remains largely overlooked (Jiang, 2014).

Thus, researchers believe that by exploring the historical development and current state of *Yulin Xiao Qu*, efforts can be made to preserve its essence and revitalize its role in traditional Chinese culture. Analyzing the singing techniques and musical characteristics of *Yulin Xiao Qu* can enhance public awareness and appreciation, contributing to the preservation and transmission of China's rich folk art heritage. Research findings indicate that the preservation of *Yulin Xiao Qu* is urgent, as most performers are amateurs with limited formal education, which has hindered its cultural and intellectual growth. Although the local government of *Yulin* has provided support, the impact remains insufficient. Compared to other folk songs of *Northern Shaanxi*, its development platform remains highly limited.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the current state of *Yulin Xiao Qu*, Chinese folk songs in Northern Shaanxi Province.
2. To analyze the singing techniques of *Yulin Xiao Qu*, Chinese folk songs in Northern Shaanxi Province.
3. To propose guidelines for the preservation and transmission of *Yulin Xiao Qu* Chinese folk songs in Northern Shaanxi Province.

Research Questions

1. What are the development and current state of *Yulin Xiao Qu* Chinese folk songs in Northern Shaanxi Province?
2. What are the key singing techniques used in *Yulin Xiao Qu*, a Chinese folk song tradition from Northern Shaanxi Province?
3. How can the preservation and transmission of *Yulin Xiao Qu* Chinese folk songs in Northern Shaanxi Province be achieved?

LITERATURE REVIEW

General Knowledge about *Yulin Xiao Qu* Chinese Folk Songs in Northern Shaanxi Province

Yulin Xiao Qu, also known as *Yulin Qing Song*, is a traditional folk music style popular in *Yulin County, Northern Shaanxi Province*. Originating from a fusion of *Ming* and *Qing Dynasty* folk songs, it developed through cultural exchanges between southern and northern China. Historical records suggest that *Yulin Xiao Qu* was introduced from *Jiangnan* in the 17th century and gradually evolved into a distinct local genre (Wang, 2014).

Development and transformation

The development of *Yulin Xiao Qu* has undergone several phases, including its formation, popularization, decline, and recovery (Teng & Lv, 2018). During the late *Qing Dynasty* and early *Republic of China*, the genre flourished as it absorbed diverse musical elements. By the 1950s, it had gained widespread recognition, influenced by political and cultural movements. However, like many traditional art forms, it suffered a decline during the *Cultural Revolution*, with performances largely disappearing from public spaces. Despite this, informal oral transmission within families helped preserve the tradition (Lv, 2019).

A significant revival began in 1979 with government-led efforts to document and promote the music. The establishment of the *Yulin Xiao Qu Research Group* in 1986 played a crucial role in its restoration, leading to renewed scholarly interest and performance opportunities (Pan, 2015).

Artistic characteristics

Thematically, *Yulin Xiao Qu* reflects everyday life, social customs, and emotional experiences, commonly performed at festivals, weddings, and funerals. Structurally, it follows a flexible folk song format, allowing for improvisation and emotional depth. Singing techniques include falsetto singing, true-falsetto combinations, and trill singing, contributing to its unique musical expression. Additionally, it employs both

major and minor melodies, often accompanied by traditional Chinese instruments such as the *pipa*, *dulcimer*, *Jinghu*, and *three-string* (He, 1994; Teng & Lv, 2018).

Current state and challenges

Despite being recognized as a *national intangible cultural heritage*, *Yulin Xiao Qu* faces challenges in preservation and transmission (Zhang, 2017). Modern audiences favor mainstream music, and younger generations show limited interest in learning traditional forms. While governmental support exists, it remains insufficient in revitalizing *Yulin Xiao Qu* on a larger scale. Further efforts in education, documentation, and public engagement are essential to ensuring its long-term survival (Gao, 2017).

The historical evolution of *Yulin Xiao Qu* highlights its cultural significance and adaptability. While it has experienced periods of decline, ongoing preservation efforts demonstrate its resilience. However, without sustained support and modern integration, this traditional folk music may struggle to remain relevant in contemporary society (Zhou, 1986; Bai, 2000).

General Knowledge of the Singing Techniques of Yulin Xiao Qu Chinese Folk Songs in Northern Shaanxi Province

Musical characteristics of Yulin Xiao Qu

The musical structure of *Yulin Xiao Qu* consists of both singing and instrumental accompaniment. The singing style is further divided into *Da Diao* and *Xiao Diao*, which are not related to Western musical modes but instead refer to the structural development of the songs (Li, 2016).

Xiao Diao, also known as *one-character tune*, follows a single-segment structure, characterized by a concise melody that repeats with different lyrics. Typically, *Xiao Diao* songs contain four-line verses, with each line composed of seven or five characters. Among the 80 documented *Yulin Xiao Qu* pieces, more than 60 are in the *Xiao Diao* style, highlighting its widespread popularity. Due to its short and catchy nature, *Xiao Diao* remains the preferred format for performances today. A defining feature of *Xiao Diao* is its abrupt ending, where the final note is not sustained but instead stops suddenly. This technique enhances the artistic effect, leaving audiences with a lingering impression and a desire to hear more (Shi, 2023).

In contrast, *Da Diao*, also known as *Lian Qu*, features longer compositions with a well-developed storyline. The musical development employs techniques such as interlocking phrases, entangling melodies, and repetition, resulting in a stronger narrative expression. *Da Diao* pieces often build dramatic tension, allowing for greater emotional depth in performance.

Lyrics and singing techniques of Yulin Xiao Qu

Singing language and stylistic features

The lyrics of *Yulin Xiao Qu* are predominantly sung in the Yulin City dialect, which belongs to the *Jin* language family.

This dialect includes 24 initial consonants and 41 vowels, making it phonetically rich. Due to historical influences, the pronunciation of *Yulin Xiao Qu* falls between Standard Mandarin and the local dialect, allowing for relatively easy comprehension (Wang, 2002; Yang, 2010).

A distinctive feature of *Yulin Xiao Qu* lyrics is the use of lining words, village words, and interlining sentences, which serve various artistic functions. These elements help to fill rhythmic gaps, enhance emotional expression, and reinforce thematic content. The lyrical themes predominantly depict daily life, marketplace scenes, tea houses, nature, and romanticized imagery, reflecting the Jiangnan musical tradition. Compared to *Xin Tian You*, a well-known folk song style from *Northern Shaanxi*, *Yulin Xiao Qu* lyrics are more delicate and poetic, favoring refined language over direct emotional release (Zhang, 2006; Yang, 2009).

Singing techniques

Breathing control is fundamental to singing *Yulin Xiao Qu*. Proper breath support involves deep inhalation through both the mouth and nose, expansion of the diaphragm, and controlled exhalation to sustain vocal phrases (Zhang, 2006). This technique ensures vocal stability and resonance, which are essential for expressive singing. Resonance is also a crucial component, requiring the opening of the oral, nasal, and chest cavities to amplify the voice naturally (Cui, 2015; Shan & Lan, 2023).

Diction plays a vital role in the artistic expression of *Yulin Xiao Qu*. Since each lyrical passage represents a vivid scene or narrative, clear articulation is essential for conveying meaning effectively. The singer must align the vocal delivery with the pronunciation of each word, ensuring emotional depth and authenticity in performance.

Three primary singing methods

Yulin Xiao Qu features a variety of vocal techniques that contribute to its distinctive musical identity. Among these, three primary singing methods are particularly noteworthy for their stylistic and expressive functions.

1. Gaoqiang Singing (Falsetto Singing) – Traditionally, male singers performing female roles used falsetto singing, often in lip-synched performances to achieve a feminine vocal quality.
2. True-Falsetto Combination Singing – In modern performances, *Yulin Xiao Qu* has moved beyond traditional constraints, allowing for male-female duets and solo performances in both male and female voices. In this technique, male voices primarily use falsetto, while female voices rely more on their natural vocal range.
3. Glissando and Trill Singing – To create an expressive and lyrical quality, *Yulin Xiao Qu* employs glissando (smooth pitch transitions) and trill techniques (rapid alternation between notes). These techniques contribute to the elegant and emotive nature of the music.

The singing techniques and musical characteristics of *Yulin Xiao Qu* demonstrate its rich cultural heritage and

artistic complexity. The division between *Xiao Diao* and *Da Diao* highlights its structural diversity, while the lyrical content reflects both local life and refined poetic traditions. The unique singing techniques, breath control, and articulation further distinguish *Yulin Xiao Qu* from other folk music genres (Zhu, 2020). However, as with many traditional art forms, its survival depends on continued preservation efforts and modern adaptations to engage contemporary audiences (Kou, 2011; Zhao, 2012).

General Knowledge of the Social and Cultural Aspects of Yulin City in Northern Shaanxi Province

Social and cultural aspects of Yulin City, Northern Shaanxi Province

Yulin City is a prefecture-level city in *Shaanxi Province*, historically known as *Shangjun*, *Tuocheng*, *Little Beijing*, and *the Pearl of Seishang*. Located at the junction of the *Loess Plateau* and *Mu Us Sandy Land*, *Yulin* serves as a transitional region between the *Loess Plateau* and the *Inner Mongolia Plateau*. It is strategically positioned at the convergence of *Shaanxi*, *Gansu*, *Ningxia*, *Inner Mongolia*, and *Shanxi Provinces*, covering an area of 42,920.2 square kilometers. As of 2022, the city had a permanent population of 3.61 million, governing two municipal districts, nine counties, and one county-level city as illustrated in Figure 1 (Li, 2014).

Intangible cultural heritage of Yulin City

Yulin boasts a rich intangible cultural heritage, with diverse traditional arts, performances, and crafts that have been passed down for generations. Among its most significant

traditions are Northern Shaanxi Yang Ge, Yulin Xiao Qu, Jingbian Running Donkey, and Yulin Paper Cutting, each contributing to the city's vibrant cultural identity.

Northern Shaanxi Yang Ge

Northern Shaanxi Yang Ge is a folk dance tradition widely performed in *Yulin*, *Yan'an*, *Suide*, *Mizhi*, and surrounding areas, with *Suide Yang Ge* being the most representative. This dance is deeply integrated into festivals and community celebrations, particularly during the Spring Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival. *Yang Ge* performances are divided into large-scale formations ("big field") and smaller performances ("small field"), with dance sequences forming symbolic patterns such as "dragon wagging tail," "rolling cabbage," and "cross plum blossom." Smaller performances often include theatrical elements, depicting romantic interactions and folk narratives.

Yulin Xiao Qu

Yulin Xiao Qu is a unique musical tradition that represents the artistic essence of *Yulin City*. Characterized by its soft and melodic style, it combines silk-string instrumental accompaniment with expressive singing techniques. Over centuries, it has become deeply rooted in the local culture, recognized for its euphemistic and poetic nature (Zhang & Zhang, 2012; Li, 2017).

Jingbian running donkey

Jingbian Running Donkey is a folk song and dance tradition from *Jingbian County*, *Yulin City*. Recognized as a



Figure 1. Geographical location of Yulin City in China (HKTDC Research, 2019).

national intangible cultural heritage, it originates from the Ming Dynasty, inspired by the legend of *Zhang Guolao riding a donkey backward*. The performance, often humorous, features one person riding a mock donkey while another guides it, incorporating comic dialogue and improvisational acting. Over time, the dance has evolved to include new narrative elements, such as “*husband and wife visit*,” “*market road*,” and “*grandfather and grandson market*,” allowing the tradition to remain relevant while preserving its entertaining and interactive essence.

Yulin paper cutting

Yulin Paper Cutting is a traditional folk-art form deeply embedded in local customs. Known as the “soul of loess culture,” it features intricate designs depicting characters, animals, flowers, mythological figures, and historical scenes. The style combines delicate, transparent craftsmanship with bold and exaggerated artistic expressions, reflecting both elegance and simplicity. Over the centuries, *Yulin Paper Cutting* has been widely used in festivals, weddings, and religious ceremonies, maintaining its aesthetic and cultural significance.

Traditional folk activities in Yulin city

Alongside its rich artistic traditions, *Yulin City* is home to several folk festivals and customs, which play a crucial role in community bonding and cultural continuity. Some of the most notable folk traditions include *Zhuan Jiu Qu*, *Tie Shui Da Hua*, and *Yuhe Chenghuangmiao Miaohui*, each embodying the city’s spiritual beliefs and historical legacy.

Zhuan Jiu Qu

Zhuan Jiu Qu, also known as “*Zhuan Deng*,” is a folk ritual practiced across the Yellow River Basin. This tradition is performed annually to seek divine blessings, expel evil spirits, and ensure prosperity. The ritual involves creating a labyrinth-like pattern with sorghum straw, lighting 360 oil lamps, and leading a procession through the illuminated paths while playing gongs, drums, and suona. The symbolic meaning behind the “Nine Curves” is deeply tied to longevity and spiritual cleansing, with participants believing that completing the ritual will ward off misfortune and bring good health.

Tie Shui Da Hua

Tie Shui Da Hua (Iron Water Fireworks) is a spectacular folk firework display that originated in the Northern Song Dynasty and flourished during the *Ming* and *Qing* Dynasties. Initially a Taoist ritual performed by metalworkers to honor *Taishang Laojun*, the process involves throwing molten iron against a wooden surface, creating brilliant sparks resembling flowers in the night sky. Over time, it has evolved into a major public celebration, particularly during temple fairs and festive events. The tradition, once nearly lost, has been revived through government efforts and cultural preservation initiatives.

Yuhe Chenghuangmiao Miaohui

The *Yuhe Chenghuangmiao Miaohui* is a historically significant temple fair dedicated to the City God of Yulin. Recognized as a Shaanxi provincial intangible cultural heritage, the temple fair dates back over 500 years and was once among the three largest *City God Temples* in the province. According to legend, *Emperor Kangxi* personally honored the temple after the *City God of Yuhe* was believed to have saved him during a secret visit to *Yulin Wei*. Today, the temple fair remains an important religious and cultural gathering, attracting pilgrims and visitors from across the region.

The social and cultural traditions of Yulin City reflect its historical depth and artistic diversity. As a strategic and cultural hub in *Northern Shaanxi*, *Yulin* has nurtured a rich intangible heritage, spanning dance, music, folk performances, and visual arts. The city’s folk traditions, festivals, and artistic expressions not only celebrate its historical legacy but also serve as a means of cultural preservation and community identity. However, with the challenges of modernization, it is crucial to continue documenting, promoting, and educating future generations to ensure the sustainability of Yulin’s cultural heritage in the contemporary era.

General Knowledge of the Basic Characteristics of Folk Songs in Northern Shaanxi Province

Northern Shaanxi folk songs are characterized by their simplicity, free rhythm, and emotional depth, reflecting the daily lives and struggles of the local people. These songs are broadly categorized into *Xiao Diao*, *Xin Tian You*, and *Lao Dong Haozi*, each with distinct thematic and structural elements. *Xiao Diao* focuses on narrative storytelling with vivid imagery and a structured lyrical format, often reflecting historical events, folk legends, and daily life. *Xin Tian You*, a signature style of northern Shaanxi, embodies the spirit of free expression with its flowing melodies, flexible rhyming, and poetic use of imagery to convey emotions and aspirations. *Lao Dong Haozi*, or labor songs, are deeply tied to work rhythms, featuring strong, energetic vocals that encourage unity and coordination among laborers. Each of these song forms showcases the deep cultural and historical roots of northern Shaanxi’s folk music, preserving the collective identity and artistic expression of the region’s people (Barnard Alan, 2006).

Theory Used in Research

Traditional Chinese music theory

Traditional Chinese music theory provides a crucial framework for understanding the cultural and philosophical foundations of Yulin *Xiao Qu*. As Li (2016) explains, Chinese traditional music is deeply influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, which penetrate folk music and shape its structural and expressive characteristics. The analytical methods of Chinese traditional music emphasize multi-angle, multi-level, and three-dimensional analyses of

musical structures. This approach allows for a comprehensive study of Yulin Xiao Qu's musical ontology, while also recognizing the complementary role of Western music theory in analyzing musical notation and modular systems.

Musicological theory

Musicological theory offers a structured approach to analyzing Yulin Xiao Qu's singing techniques, styles, and song types. As Zhou (1986) notes, music analysis has evolved into an interdisciplinary field that spans music technology theory and musicology. This study applies musicological theory by systematically examining singing videos and audio recordings of Yulin Xiao Qu, focusing on singing techniques and performance styles. By integrating this approach, the research enhances the understanding of the technical aspects of Yulin Xiao Qu, including its melodic structure, expressive qualities, and performance variations.

Ethnomusicology theory

Ethnomusicology theory provides a broader cultural and social context for understanding Yulin Xiao Qu. Wu (1997) describes ethnomusicology as a discipline that investigates the relationship between music, geography, history, and cultural traditions, revealing patterns in musical transmission and development. This study applies ethnomusicology to analyze how Yulin Xiao Qu has evolved within different social systems and development levels. By examining the interplay between historical events, regional influences, and musical traditions, the study highlights the significance of cultural continuity in preserving Yulin Xiao Qu.

Anthropological theory

Anthropological theory supports this research by incorporating fieldwork in Yulin City to gather firsthand data on customs, lifestyle, language, and musical traditions. As Yu (1997) explains, musical anthropology is an extension of anthropology that applies its theories and methods to the study of music. Using this approach, the study examines how Yulin Xiao Qu is embedded in the daily lives of local communities. By integrating anthropology with musicology, the research captures the broader cultural ecosystem of Yulin Xiao Qu, ensuring a holistic understanding of its transmission, preservation, and significance.

Documents and Related Research

The reviewed literature provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding Yulin Xiao Qu, covering its musical characteristics, historical origins, singing techniques, transmission, and preservation. Gao (2017) and Wang (2014) define Yulin Xiao Qu as a folk-art form with a seated singing style, featuring both instrumental and vocal elements, categorized into Da Diao and Xiao Diao. Teng and Lv (2018) explore its origins, suggesting multiple influences, including court music, southern traditions, and martial arts classes brought by historical figures. Lv (2019) and Xue (2022)

highlight the challenges of oral transmission, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts to preserve and promote Yulin Xiao Qu. Wang (2007) details its core singing techniques, including falsetto, glissando, and tremolo, while Bai (2011a) stress the significant impact of dialects and tonal variations on its vocal style. Zhang (2017) and He (2020) address the importance of modernizing and promoting northern Shaanxi folk songs, advocating for government involvement, innovation, and international cultural exchange. Jiang (2015) extends this discussion to intangible cultural heritage preservation, emphasizing the need for strategic policies to safeguard traditional music. Collectively, these studies provide a comprehensive understanding of Yulin Xiao Qu, offering valuable insights into its artistic, historical, and sociocultural significance while guiding its future transmission and development.

The reviewed literature provides a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental characteristics of Yulin Xiao Qu, enriching the study with strong theoretical foundations. It offers detailed discussions on the research objectives, providing sufficient evidence to support the investigation. Regarding singing techniques, the literature outlines the fundamental vocal methods and linguistic influences, ensuring a solid basis for further exploration of Yulin Xiao Qu's vocal practices. Additionally, the research on transmission and preservation presents a well-supported theoretical framework, incorporating both historical context and contemporary challenges, reinforcing the study's foundation for analyzing the sustainability of Yulin Xiao Qu.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative ethnomusicological approach, incorporating an extensive literature review of academic documents, textbooks, reports, theories, and journal articles relevant to the research. Fieldwork was conducted through data collection from key informants, general informants, and casual informants via interviews, observations, and surveys. The study focuses on the development, singing techniques, and preservation efforts of *Yulin Xiao Qu* in Yulin City, Shaanxi Province, from April 2023 to March 2024. The research process included selecting research sites, informants, and song repertoires, along with structured data collection, management, and analysis.

Two key informants, Wang Qing and Liang Mei, were chosen for their lifelong expertise in Yulin Xiao Qu, having been born and raised in Yulin City. Their advanced age and extensive experience in playing and singing provided deep insights into its cultural development. Meanwhile, three general informants—Yao Mei, You Yunxia, and Chen Wenyi—and one casual informant, Wang Zhihang, contributed additional perspectives on its practice and transmission, enriching the understanding of its continuity and evolution. The selection of songs was based on their historical significance and stylistic representation of Yulin Xiao Qu's fusion of Jiangnan and northern Shaanxi folk traditions. Songs like *Zhang Sheng Xi Ying Ying*, *Xiao Xiao Chuan*, and *Jiu Lian Huan* were chosen for their strong Jiangnan influence, while *Qia Suan Tai* and *Xiu He Bao* reflect northern Shaanxi folk

adaptations. This selection ensures a comprehensive analysis of Yulin Xiao Qu's cultural integration, melodic progression, and expressive lyrical style.

The research instruments included literature analysis, field investigations, interviews, observations, and questionnaire surveys, aiming to deepen the understanding of Yulin Xiao Qu's musical structure and transmission. Data collection began in August 2023, incorporating literature reviews, interviews via telephone and video calls, and field investigations in Yulin City. The collected data was systematically managed through interview transcripts, audio recordings, musical scores, videos, and historical documents to ensure a thorough analysis. The study applies musicological and ethnomusicological theories to examine singing techniques, while cultural promotion theory is used to explore transmission strategies. Findings are presented across seven chapters, covering the historical background, musical characteristics, transmission challenges, and proposed preservation strategies for Yulin Xiao Qu, ultimately contributing to its broader understanding and safeguarding as a unique folk music tradition.

RESULTS

The results of this study provide a comprehensive analysis of the current state, singing techniques, and preservation strategies of Yulin Xiao Qu, a significant form of Chinese folk music from Northern Shaanxi Province. Through extensive literature reviews, field investigations, and key informant interviews, this research examines how Yulin Xiao Qu has evolved over the centuries, adapting to historical, social, and cultural transformations. By categorizing its development into distinct historical phases, the study offers a deeper understanding of its transmission patterns, stylistic evolution, and cultural significance.

This section presents findings on three key aspects: (1) the current state of Yulin Xiao Qu, including its historical development, socio-political influences, and contemporary challenges; (2) its singing techniques, which highlight breath control, resonance, lyrical articulation, and specialized vocal ornamentation; and (3) the guidelines for its preservation and transmission, which focus on strategic measures to ensure its continued survival in modern society. These results aim to bridge the gap between traditional performance practices and modern cultural preservation efforts, ensuring that Yulin Xiao Qu remains a living heritage in Chinese folk music.

The Current State of Yulin Xiao Qu Chinese Folk Songs in Northern Shaanxi Province

The development of *Yulin Xiao Qu* has evolved over centuries, influenced by historical events, cultural exchanges, and socio-political changes. The origin of *Yulin Xiao Qu* (AD 1518-1864) can be traced to multiple sources, including palace music introduced during Emperor Wuzong's frontier tour, Jiangnan folk melodies brought by officials like Tan Jichen, and military performance troupes from Hunan led by Zuo Zongtang's subordinates. During the development

period (1909-1914), *Yulin Xiao Qu* absorbed various folk music elements, incorporating anti-feudal themes and merging Jiangnan's refined silk-and-bamboo melodies with the rustic folk songs of Northern Shaanxi. Its popularity peaked between 1949-1960 when the government actively supported folk arts, allowing *Yulin Xiao Qu* to expand beyond Yulin through formal training classes and performances, leading to the formation of distinct stylistic factions. However, the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) led to a period of decline as it was labeled a remnant of feudal culture, forcing many artists to cease performances and practice in secrecy. The recovery period (1976-1986) saw efforts by cultural institutions and scholars to document and revitalize *Yulin Xiao Qu*, with significant collections published and performances revived. From 1990 to 2024, the transmission and development of *Yulin Xiao Qu* faced challenges from modern cultural influences, but dedicated artists and organizations, including the *Yulin Xiao Qu Research Association*, played a crucial role in its preservation. In 2006, it was officially recognized as a national intangible cultural heritage, leading to increased exposure through festivals, academic research, and government support. Over time, the lyrics and performance styles evolved to reflect contemporary themes, making *Yulin Xiao Qu* more relevant to modern audiences while preserving its historical and artistic essence. Today, it continues to be a vibrant representation of Yulin's cultural identity, blending tradition with innovation to ensure its survival in the 21st century.

The current state of *Yulin Xiao Qu* Chinese folk songs in *Northern Shaanxi Province* has been analyzed through a review of relevant literature and key informant interviews. Studies such as Teng Wenli and Lv Zhengxuan's *The Historical Origin and Development Period of Yulin Xiao Qu* and Li Qing's *Research on Yulin Xiao Qu* have categorized its development into five and four distinct periods, respectively. However, in an interview with key informant Wang Qing, he did not classify its development into specific periods but instead described its evolution in chronological order. By synthesizing findings from literature analysis, interviews, field investigations, and observations, the researcher identified and classified six distinct development periods that define the growth and transformation of *Yulin Xiao Qu*. These stages not only enriched its themes and lyrical content but also contributed to its unique artistic style and musical characteristics, solidifying its cultural significance within Chinese folk music traditions.

After three hundred years of development, *Yulin Xiao Qu* has undergone significant transformations, especially before and after the founding of the People's Republic of China in the 20th century. Prior to the establishment of the People's Republic of China, *Yulin Xiao Qu*, like many other forms of folk music, relied primarily on oral transmission and personal interest. The tunes and styles varied according to the personal characteristics of the transmissioners, but there was little formal research or creative expansion, preserving its "original ecology" with minimal changes. However, after the founding of the People's Republic of China, *Yulin Xiao*

Qu received strong support from government institutions. With the dedicated efforts of scholars, researchers, and a new generation of transmissioners, professional musicians contributed to the collection, research, and refinement of *Yulin Xiao Qu*. As a result, a significant number of new songs and lyrics emerged, adapting to contemporary social customs and cultural trends. What was once a regional folk song confined to Yulin City gradually expanded beyond its origins, becoming a recognized cultural heritage of Chinese music.

Influenced by its local environment and political climate, *Yulin Xiao Qu* has passed through multiple stages, including its origin, development, popularity, decline, and recovery. From its initial southern-influenced delicacy, it evolved into a graceful, high-pitched, and elegant folk tradition that reflects the folk customs and cultural identity of Yulin people. The continuous adaptation of *Yulin Xiao Qu* to changing times has solidified its position as a unique cultural symbol of Yulin, ensuring its preservation and ongoing development (Figure 2).

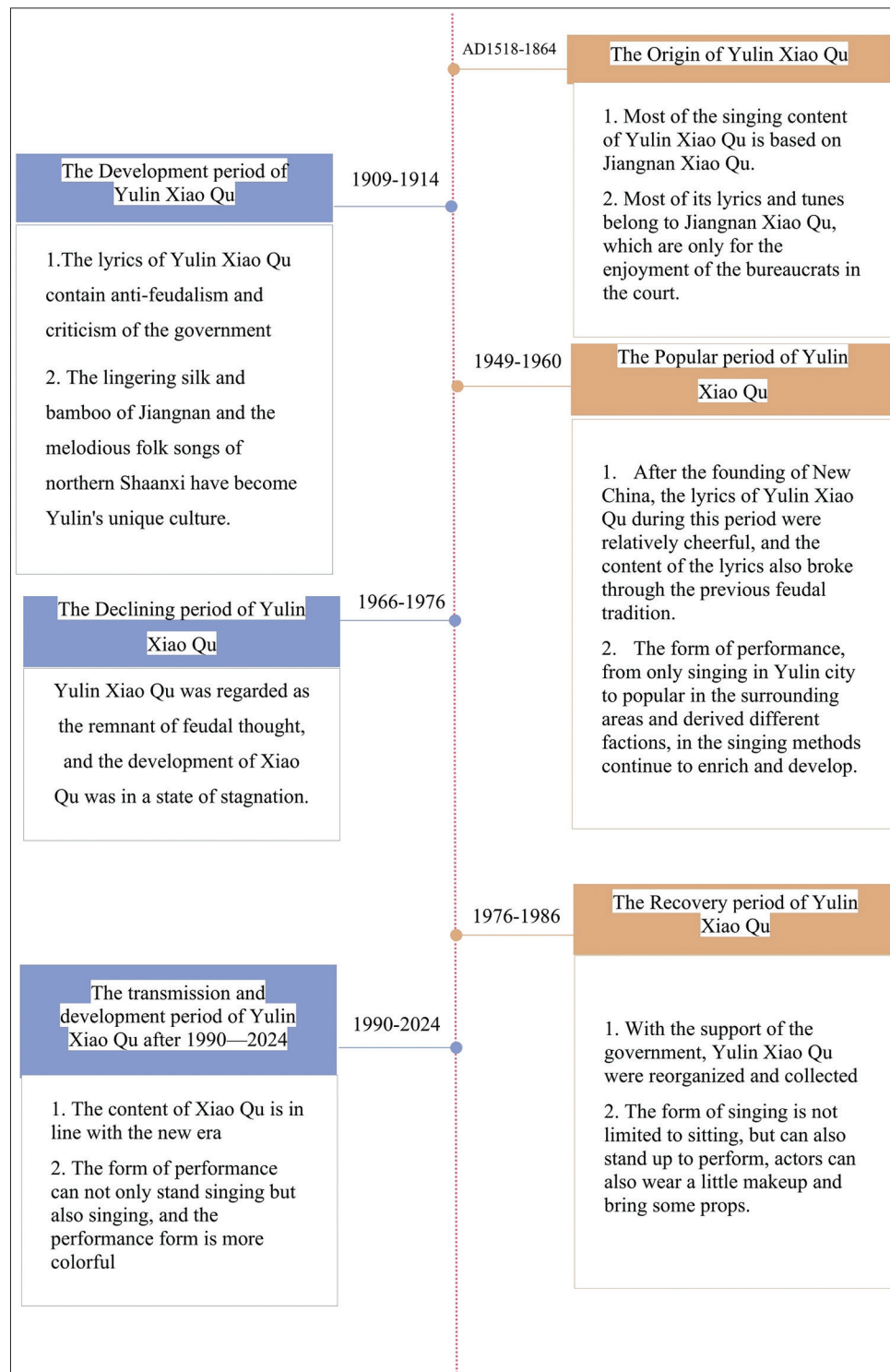


Figure 2. Development and Current State of *Yulin Xiao Qu* Chinese Folk Songs in Northern Shaanxi Province

The Singing Techniques of Yulin Xiao Qu, Chinese Folk Songs from Northern Shaanxi Province

Yulin Xiao Qu, a distinctive folk music tradition from Northern Shaanxi Province, is characterized by its nuanced vocal artistry and expressive musical style. The singing techniques employed in this genre are rooted in traditional Chinese vocal practices while showcasing regional characteristics that set it apart from other folk music forms. This section explores the essential vocal elements that contribute to the unique sound of Yulin Xiao Qu, including breathing methods, resonating techniques, lyrical expression, basic and special singing styles, and their application in representative works.

Breathing

Breath control in Yulin Xiao Qu relies on three primary methods: chest breathing, which is shallow and commonly used in daily life; abdominal breathing, which enhances air intake for deeper vocal tones; and chest-abdominal combined breathing, which optimizes airflow control, volume, and vocal stability. Observations of Yulin Xiao Qu artists reveal that their singing posture remains dignified and upright, regardless of pitch range. Artists emphasize natural breathing, with relaxed yet controlled breath flow, ensuring seamless inhalation and exhalation to maintain vocal resonance and tonal clarity. Mastering breath techniques requires relaxation, deep inhalation into the diaphragm, steady airflow control, and fluid breath exchange, all of which contribute to the expressive quality of Yulin Xiao Qu (Figure 3).

Resonating cavity

Resonance is essential in vocal production, enhancing vocal brightness, richness, and volume. Yulin Xiao Qu utilizes variable resonating cavities (pharyngeal and oral) and fixed resonating cavities (chest, nasal, and head). The pharyngeal cavity plays a crucial role in vocal depth, while the oral cavity refines tonal clarity. Chest resonance enriches lower frequencies, nasal resonance enhances brightness, and head resonance adds luster and emotional depth. Artists employ coordinated resonance techniques to amplify their voices naturally. Female singers emphasize high-position resonance, employing a lifted facial expression to project vibrant, clear tones (Figure 4).

Singing lyrics

Chen Zi, Chen Ci, and Chen Ju are fundamental to the lyrical structure of Yulin Xiao Qu. These elements fill syllables, enhance rhythm, and convey emotions unique to the folk style. Chen Zi functions as exclamatory expressions such as “ai,” “yo,” and “hai,” while Chen Ci appears as melodic phrases like “di ge” and “yo ai.” Chen Ju acts as lyrical connectors, maintaining musical fluidity. The unique Chen Zi “yue” is a distinctive identifier of Yulin Xiao Qu, akin to Jiangnan folk song expressions. Additionally, the rhotic “De er” Chen Ci requires advanced tongue control, adding a playful and dynamic texture to the vocal style.

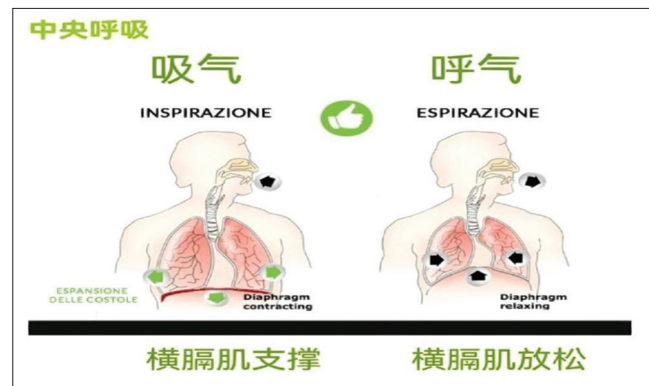


Figure 3. Use of Breath (Yang, 2017)

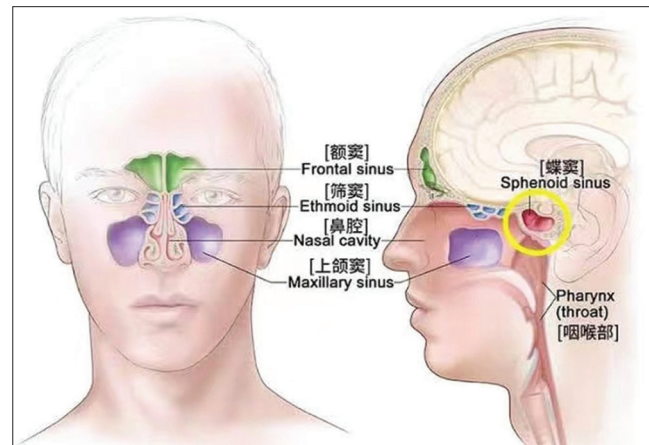


Figure 4. Nasal head cavity resonance (Google, n.d.)

Basic singing methods of Yulin Xiao Qu

1. Gaoqiang Singing (Falsetto Singing) – Traditionally, male singers performing female roles use falsetto to create distinct vocal characters.
2. True-Falsetto Combination Singing – Modern performances blend falsetto and true voice techniques, allowing flexibility in solo and duet singing. The structure of Yulin Xiao Qu, often narrative-based, necessitates this combination to express varying emotions and vocal dynamics effectively.

Special singing techniques of Yulin Xiao Qu

Run Qiang (ornamental vocalization) is a unique vocal technique in Chinese folk music, found in folk songs, opera, and Qu Yi. While its structure is relatively fixed, it allows for decorative embellishments, offering singers flexibility and improvisation. As a key element in national vocal music, it enhances expressiveness and refines tonal nuances. Three main types exist:

1. Duan Yin Run Qiang – A rhythmic, staccato-like technique that enhances phrasing and articulation, often used for dramatic effect.
2. Hua Yin Run Qiang – A melodic embellishment involving Shang Hua Yin and Xia Hua Yin, imparting elegance and fluidity to the melody.
3. Zhuang Shi Yin Run Qiang – A decorative vocal technique used to convey emotions such as sighing, joy,

or sorrow, enhancing the storytelling aspect of Yulin Xiao Qu.

These techniques, combined with meticulous breath control, resonating cavity manipulation, and lyrical intricacies, contribute to the distinctive vocal artistry of Yulin Xiao Qu, preserving its cultural essence while allowing for artistic innovation.

Application of singing technique of Yulin Xiao Qu in the song

The application of singing techniques in Yulin Xiao Qu is demonstrated through various representative songs, each reflecting distinct stylistic and technical features.

Zhang Sheng Xi Ying Ying exemplifies the Jiangnan musical influence, requiring breath control techniques such as deep chest-abdominal breathing to support large vocal leaps, particularly in octave passages. Resonance techniques play a crucial role, with head cavity and nasal resonance maintaining brightness and clarity in high registers, while chest resonance stabilizes lower notes. *Xiao Xiao Chuan* follows a more relaxed structure, incorporating nasal and oral resonance to enhance the folk-like quality of its melodic lines, while *Chen Ci* and *Chen Ju* fill rhythmic gaps and add regional flavor (Figure 5).

Jiu Lian Huan, known for its dynamic rhythm and large vocal range, relies on the coordination of head, nasal, and pharyngeal resonance, with breathing techniques adapted to sustain long lyrical phrases and rapid articulations (Figure 6).

The Xiao Qu *Qia Suan Tai* and *Xiu He Bao* showcase the influence of northern Shaanxi folk music, incorporating mixed resonance and distinct embellishments such as *Hua Yin Run Qiang* and *Zhuang Shi Yin Run Qiang*, which add expressive depth. Throughout these songs, singers employ both true and falsetto voices to navigate complex melodies and tonal shifts, while traditional *Chen Ci* like “yue” and “de er” serve as stylistic markers (Figure 7).

The mastery of these techniques requires structured practice, beginning with controlled breath support, resonating chamber adjustments, and integration of vocal embellishments. Learning is further enhanced by engaging with classic Yulin Xiao Qu works, participating in cultural exchanges, and innovating by incorporating modern musical elements. Through continuous refinement and adaptation, Yulin Xiao Qu maintains its cultural identity while evolving to meet contemporary artistic expressions.

Guidelines for the Preservation and Transmission of Yulin Xiao Qu: Chinese Folk Songs in Northern Shaanxi Province

The preservation and transmission of Yulin Xiao Qu are explored through three key perspectives: the importance of preserving this traditional folk music, effective preservation measures, and strategies for ensuring its continued transmission. The cultural and historical significance of Yulin Xiao Qu is highlighted, emphasizing its role in representing the unique musical heritage of Northern Shaanxi Province.

Zhang Sheng Xi Ying Ying
张生戏莺莺

Yingjie Hu singing
胡英杰演唱
翟向贵记谱
Xianggui Huo Ji Pu

慢速 $\text{♩} = 60$
Larghetto

hao yi duo xian hua hao yi duo xian hua
好 一 朵 鲜 花, 好 一 朵 鲜 花,
san yue li tao hua kai jiu yue li ju hua huang
三 月 里 桃 花 开, 九 月 里 菊 花 黄,
ai gao xiao hong niang ai gao xiao hong niang
哀 告 小 红 娘, 哀 告 小 红 娘,

man yuan di hua kai sai ya sai bu guo ta
满 园 (的) 花 开 赛 (呀) 赛 不 过 它,
dan deng na zhang sheng tiao guo fen bi qiang ai yo
单 等 (那) 张 生 跳 过 粉 壁 墙 (哟 哎),
ke lian wo zhang sheng gui zai ni men shang
可 怜 (我) 张 生 跪 在 你 门 上,

wo you xin cai yi zhi ya kong hai pa kan hua ren
我 有 心 采 一 枝 (呀), 恐 害 怕 看 花 人
jing xing lai cui ying ying ya hua la la men ya guan
惊 醒 来 催 莺 莺 (呀), 哗 啦 啦 门 呀 关
jin ye wan bu kai men ya gui zai ge dong fang fang
今 夜 晚 不 开 门 (呀), 跪 在 (个) 东 方 方

ma ai hai ai hai yue
骂 (哎 嗨 哎 嗨 月),
shang ai hai ai hai yue
上 (哎 嗨 哎 嗨 月),
liang ai hai ai hai yue
亮 (哎 嗨 哎 嗨 月)。

Figure 5. Zhang Sheng Xi Ying Ying (Jia Wang, 2024)

Jiu Lian Huan
九连环

Chunlan Wu Singing
吴春兰演唱
翟向贵记谱
Xianggui Huo Ji Pu

mu di ge yo ai
奴 的 (个 哟 哎)

gan lang yi er di ge
干 郎 一 儿 的 个

yo ai hai yi er yi er yo ai
哟 哎 嗨 一 儿 一 儿 哟 哎

qing ren dige yo ai
情 人 (的个) 哟 哎
yi geng li ai
一 更 里 哎

song nu yi ba jiu lian di ge
送 奴 一 把 九 连 的 (个)
yi geng gu li yi er di ge
一 更 鼓 里 一 儿 (的个)

Figure 6. Jiu Lian Huan (Jia Wang, 2024)

Various preservation measures, including documentation, digitization, and government support, are examined to ensure the sustainability of this folk tradition. Additionally, transmission methods such as educational initiatives, public

performances, and mentorship programs help pass down the art form to future generations.

exchange, ensuring that this valuable art form remains vibrant in modern society.

Importance of preservation Yulin Xiao Qu

The preservation of Yulin Xiao Qu is essential due to its historical, cultural, and spiritual significance. As the only surviving folk music from the Ming and Qing dynasties, Yulin Xiao Qu represents a unique blend of Jiangnan ditty and northern Shaanxi folk songs, reflecting centuries of cultural exchange and social evolution. Its historical value extends beyond its origin, providing insight into the lifestyles and traditions of Yulin’s people while contributing to the broader study of Chinese folk music. Culturally, it serves as a living relic of multi-musical traditions, enhancing the historical and cultural identity of Yulin and supporting tourism and cultural development. The protection of Yulin Xiao Qu not only helps preserve the city’s folk heritage but also contributes to the enrichment of contemporary Chinese culture. Spiritually, Yulin Xiao Qu has played a vital role in people’s daily lives, offering relaxation, artistic enjoyment, and emotional connection. Its continued transmission strengthens the appreciation of traditional Chinese music and promotes international cultural

Preservation measures of Yulin Xiao Qu

The preservation of Yulin Xiao Qu relies on multiple strategic measures, including digitalization, institutional support, personnel recruitment, and cultural innovation. The establishment of the Shaanxi Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center has played a vital role in documenting Yulin Xiao Qu through digital archives, ensuring its systematic preservation and accessibility. The recruitment of Yulin Xiao Qu performers by the Yuyang District government and the Shaanxi Northern Folk Song Museum marks a historic breakthrough, allowing young artists to professionally engage in its transmission. The Northern Shaanxi Folk Song Museum further enhances preservation efforts by providing a dedicated space for research, performance, and education. Additionally, the innovation and modernization of Yulin Xiao Qu, such as its incorporation into the musical *My Yulin Xiao Qu*, have revitalized its appeal across different generations. Expanding its audience through increased publicity, adapting performance styles with visual elements, and integrating new themes relevant to contemporary society have further strengthened its cultural significance. The establishment of the Yulin Xiao Qu Research Institute has also played a crucial role in fostering academic study, organizing performances, and training new talent. Through these comprehensive measures, Yulin Xiao Qu continues to be preserved, developed, and transmitted, ensuring its survival and relevance in the modern era (Figure 8).

Qia Suan Tai
掐蒜苔

Yingjie Hu singing
胡英杰演唱
董尚贵记谱
Xianggui Huo Ji Pu

中速 ♩ = 72
Moderato

nu zai ya yuan zi li ya jiu qia suan ni jiu tai
奴在呀园子里呀就掐蒜(你)就苔,
shou ban shang yuan zai qiang ya jiu wang wai bian jiu qiao
手板上院子墙(呀)就往外(边)就瞧,
ni yao chi tai ni jiu na shang ya jiu san liang ba jiu tai
你要吃苔你就拿上(呀)就三两把(就)苔。

5
cong qiang liao guo lai jie zhi lai zhe shi ge hao qi de guai
从墙撩过来戒指来,这是个好奇的(的)怪。
qiao jian zhang jia de er xiu cai ni cong na li jiu lai
瞧见张家的二秀才,你从哪(里)就(来)?
ni yao cheng qin jiu wan shang lai nu yu ni ba men jiu kai
你要成亲就晚上来,奴与你把(门)就(开)。

Figure 7. Qia Suan Tai (Jia Wang, 2024)

Transmission measures for Yulin Xiao Qu

The transmission of Yulin Xiao Qu has evolved from traditional family-based and master-apprentice models to modern institutional and digital approaches. Historically, Yulin Xiao Qu was passed down within families, forming distinct singing schools such as the Front Street and Back Street factions, each with unique stylistic characteristics. With

陕西省非物质文化遗产数据库
陕西省非物质文化遗产保护中心

首页 综述 法规文件 国家级保护项目 省级保护项目 传承人 论文专著 陕西非遗保护动态

该插件不受支持

陕西非遗保护动态 更多

- 陕西大国家非遗传承人作品展亮相
- 陕西师范大学第十一期、第十二期...
- 中国工艺美术非遗作品暨非遗工...
- 陕西省级非遗“华昌皮影制作技艺”...
- 陕西渭南：非遗“传家宝”书写“...
- 陕西非遗 古老民俗闪耀时代光彩
- 2018年陕西戏剧类中国非遗传承人...

综述

古希腊人曾说过“只有民族的才是世界的”，中国是世界上唯一一个拥有5000年文明长河而不曾中断的国家。悠久的历史赋予了中华民族博大而丰富的文化遗产。这些文化遗产分为两类，一是物质文化遗产，二是非物质文化遗产。它们都是人类文化多样性的生动展示，也是人类创造力和智慧的结晶。作为现存文化的记忆，非物质文化遗产与物质文化遗产具有同等的重要地位。以民间文学、民间音乐、民间舞蹈、传统戏剧、曲艺、杂技、民间美术、传统手工艺、...[详细资讯](#)

法规文件 更多

- 文化部、财政部联合发出《关于实施中...
- 国务院关于加强文化遗产保护的通知
- 国家级非物质文化遗产保护与管理暂行...
- 国务院公布第二批国家级非物质文化遗产...
- 文化部关于申报第一批国家级非物质文...
- 国务院办公厅关于加强我国非物质文化遗产...
- 全国人大常委会关于批准《保护非物质...

Figure 8. Shaanxi intangible Cultural Heritage Database (Shaanxi Library, 2017)

the establishment of formal training programs in the mid-20th century, government initiatives and academic research facilitated a broader transmission network, allowing the art form to reach audiences beyond Yulin City. The creation of the Yulin Xiao Qu Research Association in 2005 further institutionalized its preservation and promotion. In contemporary times, Yulin Xiao Qu has entered educational institutions, with schools and universities incorporating it into their curricula to foster appreciation among younger generations. Additionally, participation in national intangible cultural heritage events, such as the Annual Conference on Safeguarding China's Intangible Cultural Heritage, has significantly increased its visibility. Digital platforms, including social media and online concerts, have further expanded its reach, allowing for real-time engagement with global audiences. The combination of traditional, educational, and digital transmission methods ensures the continued vitality of Yulin Xiao Qu, preserving its historical and cultural significance while adapting to modern communication channels.

In summary, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with all informants through field investigations. It is evident that the transmission and preservation of Yulin Xiao Qu have been supported by relevant transmissioners and researchers, and the specific measures for its transmission and preservation have been summarized as illustrated in Table 1.

DISCUSSION

The study of Yulin Xiao Qu's development and current state in northern Shaanxi Province reveals its deep cultural significance. Previous research, such as *The Historical Origin of Yulin Xiao Qu* by Wang Beibei (2014), primarily focused on its formation, representative pieces, and artistic value but did not classify or summarize its evolution across various historical periods. Similarly, *Exploration of Yulin Xiao Qu's Development* by Teng and Lv (2018) examined its connection to literature, music, and performance while addressing preservation challenges. However, these studies lacked a systematic classification of Yulin Xiao Qu's development over time.

In contrast, this research provides a detailed classification of Yulin Xiao Qu's historical development, emphasizing its close ties to local folk life and its multifaceted role in education, entertainment, and artistic expression. By functioning as a significant medium for cultural transmission, Yulin Xiao Qu has become a vital component of the region's musical heritage. This study highlights how the evolution of Yulin Xiao Qu reflects the aesthetic preferences and customs of northern Shaanxi, reinforcing its importance as a form of folk art that continues to shape local cultural identity.

The study of Yulin Xiao Qu's singing techniques further enhances the understanding of its unique musical style. Previous research, such as *An Exploration of the Singing Art of Yulin Xiao Qu* by Wang Xinhui (2007), analyzed basic singing methods and stylistic elements but did not examine specific songs in detail. Similarly, *Musical and Regional Characteristics of Yulin Xiao Qu* by Shi Yang (2020) explored its structure, rhythm, and melody while discussing the role of notable transmissioners like Liang Mei.

Table 1. Guidelines for the preservation and transmission of yulin xiao qu

Preservation and Transmission of Northern Shaanxi Folk Song: Yulin Xiao Qu	
The importance of preservation Yulin Xiao Qu	1. Historical significance 2. Cultural significance 3. Spiritual significance
State and problems of preservation and transmission of Yulin Xiao Qu	1. The spread is small, and the social attention is not high 2. Gradually Northern Shaanxi, folk songs, popular 3. Lack of transmission of traditional songs 4. Performance characteristics are declining 5. The aging of transmissioners 6. Lack of professional team
Preservation measures of Yulin Xiao Qu	1. Establish the Shaanxi Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center 2. Strengthen the recruitment of Yulin Xiao Qu personnel 3. Establishment of Northern Shaanxi Folk Song Museum 4. Innovation and development of Yulin Xiao Qu 5. Intensify publicity efforts to expand audience groups 6. Establish Yulin Xiao Qu Research Institute
Transmission measures for Yulin Xiao Qu	1. Transmission of the traditional mode of Yulin Xiao Qu a. Family transmission mode of Yulin Xiao Qu b. Master and Apprentice transmission mode of Yulin Ditty c. Transmission pedigree of Yulin Xiao Qu 2. The transmission of modern mode of Yulin Xiao Qu a. Yulin Xiao Qu is transmission on campus b. Transmission of Yulin Xiao Qu intangible heritage activities c. Yulin Xiao Qu is transmission on the Internet

This research expands on these previous studies by conducting an in-depth analysis of Yulin Xiao Qu's singing techniques, including breath control, resonance, and lyrical articulation. Through a word-for-word examination of five representative Yulin Xiao Qu songs, the study provides valuable insights into the precise vocal techniques needed to master this folk genre. This comprehensive approach not only enriches the understanding of Yulin Xiao Qu's singing methods but also serves as a useful reference for performing other traditional songs.

The transmission and preservation of Yulin Xiao Qu are crucial for its continued survival and development. *Research on Problems and Countermeasures of the Transmission and Development of Yulin Xiao Qu in the New Era* by Xue Zhizhang (2022) identified key challenges in Yulin Xiao Qu's transmission and proposed countermeasures. However, his study lacked substantive examples of policy implementation.

Similarly, *The Vulnerability of Yulin Xiao Qu* by Wang Beibei (2014) emphasized that its survival largely depends on dedicated individuals such as Wang Qing, whose enthusiasm and commitment play a vital role in its continuation.

This research reinforces the idea that government intervention is essential in the preservation of Yulin Xiao Qu. Establishing research and preservation bases, integrating Yulin Xiao Qu into school curricula, and utilizing digital platforms are key measures for ensuring its sustainability. The incorporation of online and offline methods has expanded its audience, making this folk art form more accessible to modern listeners. To further secure its future, continuous efforts in documentation, research, innovation, and education are necessary. By aligning Yulin Xiao Qu with contemporary aesthetic preferences, it can be preserved at a higher level while maintaining its cultural authenticity.

CONCLUSION

The development and transmission of Yulin Xiao Qu have undergone a long historical evolution, reflecting the cultural integration and artistic diversity of northern Shaanxi. Originating in the Ming Dynasty and influenced by the migration of Jiangnan culture, Yulin Xiao Qu flourished during the Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China but faced a period of stagnation during the Cultural Revolution. Since the 1990s, with official recognition and inclusion in the national intangible cultural heritage list, efforts to protect and promote this unique folk music have significantly increased. Analyzing its singing techniques reveals that mastering breath control, resonance, lyrics articulation, basic singing methods, and special techniques such as staccato and glissando are crucial for maintaining its distinctive style. Preservation and transmission measures include both traditional and modern approaches, such as family and apprentice-based learning, integration into school curricula, digital documentation, and performances at cultural events. Additionally, the establishment of the Shaanxi Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center, recruitment of performers, creation of the Northern Shaanxi Folk Song Museum, and the formation of the Yulin Xiao Qu Research Institute contribute to its ongoing preservation. Strengthening publicity and expanding the audience base further ensure that Yulin Xiao Qu remains a vital part of China's cultural heritage.

Based on the research results presented, the following suggestions are proposed for reference and further study:

- Using Research Findings to Enhance the Popularity and Preservation of Yulin Xiao Qu: The research findings highlight the current state of Yulin Xiao Qu, its singing techniques, and the challenges it faces in transmission and preservation. This information can be utilized to raise awareness about the importance of preserving this traditional music genre and to develop strategies for passing it on to future generations.
- Addressing the Gap in the Analysis of Yulin Xiao Qu Singing Techniques: A review of various literature sources reveals a lack of detailed analysis regarding the singing techniques of Yulin Xiao Qu. This study fills the gap by providing a practical application of these techniques in songs, offering valuable insights that can assist future generations in learning and performing Yulin Xiao Qu.
- Leveraging Technology for the Preservation and Dissemination of Yulin Xiao Qu: With technological advancements, new opportunities for preserving and disseminating Yulin Xiao Qu have emerged. For example, creating digital resources such as video recordings and instructional materials can help promote and expand the reach of this traditional music genre, making it more accessible to a wider audience.

By implementing these recommendations, the preservation and transmission of Yulin Xiao Qu can be further strengthened, ensuring its continuity as an essential part of Chinese folk music heritage.

REFERENCES

- Bai, X. Q. (2000). Investigation report on the status quo of folk songs in four counties of Yulin in northern Shaanxi. *Zhongguo Yinyue*, 1, 63–66.
- Bai, X. W. (2011a). Research on the relation of folk song melody and dialect in Yulin local dialect. *Journal of Xinjiang Arts Institute*, 9(2), 31–33.
- Bai, X. W. (2011b). Fully grasp the research object, ponder the development vein of traditional music—Yulin Xiao Qu research and recognition. *Music Studies*, 4, 58–60.
- Barnard, A. (2006). *Anthropological history and theory*. People's Music Publishing House.
- Chen, W. X. (2005). *Preliminary study on Yulin Xiao Qu*. In H. Xianggui (Ed.), *Yulin Xiao Qu collection*. Shaanxi Tourism Publishing House.
- Cheng, M. (2013). Yulin Xiao Qu. *Quyuan Baike*, 37.
- Cui, D. (2015). Exploring the techniques of Bel Canto in Northern Shaanxi folk song singing. *Industrial & Science Tribune*, 14(20), 199–200.
- Gao, F. R. (2017). *Phoenix nirvana—A study of Yulin ditty on the "stage."* People's Music Publishing House.
- Google. (n.d.). *Nasal head cavity resonance*. <https://g.co/about/vck64v>
- He, F. (1994). Hu Yingjie, an old artist of Yulin Xiao Qu. *Yuyang Literature and History*, 6, 221.
- He, H. Z. (2020). *Research on external communication of Yulin culture—Taking external translation of Northern Shaanxi folk songs as an example*. Suzhou University Press.
- HKTDC Research. (2019, May 17). *Shanxi Province: Market profile*. HKTDC Research. <http://china-trade-research.hktdc.com/business-news/article/Facts-and-Figures/Shanxi-Market-Profile/ff/en/1/1X000000/1X06BVQP.htm>
- Jiang, C. (2014). *Analysis of folk songs in Northern Shanxi*. Yellow River of the Song.
- Jiang, X. F. (2015). Research on the path of intangible cultural heritage preservation in sports field in Northern Shaanxi. *Proceedings of the 2015 International Conference on Social Science and Technology Education*.

- Kou, L. L. (2011). Enlightenment of Northern Shaanxi folk song singing methods on contemporary ethnic vocal music—The influence of Northern Tianyou on contemporary ethnic vocal music singing style. *Journal of Shaanxi Institute of Education (Social Science Edition)*, 27(2), 14–16.
- Li, Q. (2017). *Yulin Xiao Qu research*. Yan'an University.
- Li, X. L. (2014). *Annals of Yulin Prefecture*. Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House.
- Li, Y. H. (2016). The teaching and research of Chinese traditional music: Characteristics, ideas, and methods. *Journal of Music Research*, 4(1), 45–50.
- Lv, Z. X. (2019). Collection, arrangement, and research of Yulin Xiao Qu. *Journal of Yulin University*, 29(5), 14–16.
- Pan, S. L. (2015). *A study on the cultural change of Yulin Colitty*. Xi'an University of Technology.
- Shaanxi Library. (2017, March 2). *Shaanxi intangible cultural heritage database*. https://www.sxlib.org.cn/dfzy/feiwuzhi/sjyp/qy/12/201703/t20170302_637137.html
- Shan, L., & Lan, H. (2023). On the singing styles and features of folk songs in Northern Shaanxi from the perspective of driving livestock. *Journal of Sociology and Ethnology*, 3(7).
- Shen, F. (2010). Lining words and accents in folk songs. *Drama Monthly*, 3(6), 41–42.
- Shi, Y. (2023). Music characteristics and singing analysis of Yulin Xiao Qu. 2(5), 10–20.
- Teng, W. L., & Lv, Z. X. (2018). The historical origin and development stage of Yulin Xiao Qu. *Wenhua Yichan*, 3, 151–157.
- Teng, W., & Lu, Z. (2018). *Exploration of Yulin Xiao Qu's development*. China Music Press.
- Wang, B. B. (2014). The historical origin of Yulin Xiao Qu. *Music Time*, 16, 78–80.
- Wang, X. H. (2002). Exploration on the singing skills of Northern Shaanxi folk songs. *The New Voice of Yuefu (The Academic Periodical of Shenyang Conservatory of Music)*, 1, 54–56.
- Wang, X. H. (2007). Yulin ditty singing art exploration. *Jiaoxiang—Journal of Xi'an Conservatory of Music*, 26(3), 68–70.
- Wang, X. R. (2023). *Take "Orchid Flower" and "Thirty MilShop" as an example*. China Music Press.
- Wu, G. D. (1997). *An Introduction to Ethnomusicology*. People's Music Publishing House.
- Xue, Z. Z. (2022). Research on the transmission and development of Yulin Xiao Qu in the new era. *Baihua*, 11, 74–75.
- Yang, S. (2020). *Musical and regional characteristics of Yulin Xiao Qu*. China Music Press.
- Yang, S. Y. (2017). The use of breath in singing. *Science Forum*, 3, 112–114.
- Yang, T. (2009). Analysis of the most common singing skills in Northern Shaanxi folk songs. *Writer Magazine*, 2, 234.
- Yang, T. (2010). The role and significance of dialect in the singing of folk songs in Northern Shaanxi.
- Yu, R. H. (1997). *An Introduction to Musicology*. People's Music Publishing House.
- Zhang, L. K. (2006). Analysis of folk song singing skills. *Qinghai Social Science*, 6, 83–85.
- Zhang, Y. Y. (2017). An introduction to the transmission value of folk songs in Northern Shaanxi. *Shanxi Youth*, 16, 286.
- Zhang, Z. B. (2006). With the soul and skills to sing the charm of Northern Shaanxi folk songs—One of the folk song singing skills research. *Journal of Northwest University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 36(1), 76–78.
- Zhang, Z. B., & Zhang, J. (2012). Exploring Yulin Xiao Qu. *Journal of Xi'an Conservatory of Music (Quarterly)*, 31(1), 41–44.
- Zhao, B. B. (2012). The singing methods and singing skills of Northern Shaanxi folk songs. *Folk Art and Literature*, 24(12), 93–95.
- Zhou, Q. R. (1986). A general tendency for advances in contemporary music analysis. *Music Research*, 4, 34–36.
- Zhou, Y. Z. (2020). An analysis of the artistic characteristics and singing treatment of the folk song "SanShi" in Northern Shaanxi. *Drama House*, 25, 88–89.
- Zhu, Y. C. (2020). On the singing characteristics and singing skills of Northern Shaanxi folk songs. *Song of Yellow River*, 8, 100–101.